

A HIT?

That's elementary

Spielberg brings back Holmes . . . with some great special effects

THE tall, long-nosed, aristocratic schoolboy looks the short, dumpy, flustered kid up and down.

"Your name is James Watson. Your father is a doctor. You come from the north of England and you love custard tarts and rather over-indulge this love."

The plump Watson is startled. "My name is John Watson, not James," he returns indignantly.

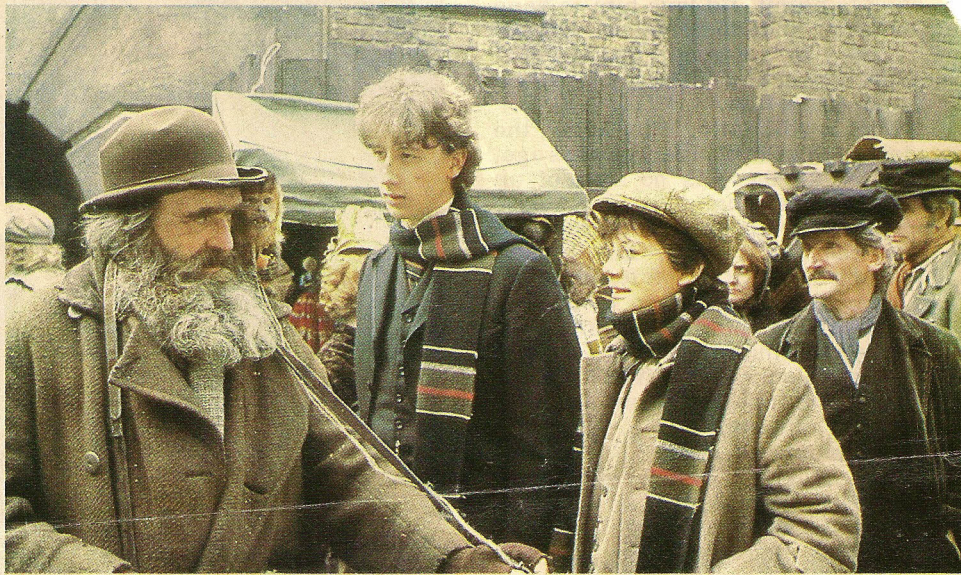
The senior shrugs: "John, James, what's the difference?"

And so begins the legendary friendship between Sherlock Holmes and Dr Watson . . . and one of the year's most surprising, enchanting, rollicking adventure movies, *Young Sherlock Holmes*.

The movie which stars two unknown actors — 19-year-old former Etonian Nicholas Rowe as Sherlock and 14-year-old Alan Cox as the youthful Watson — is the latest film out of Spielberg's Amblin stable.

When it previewed in New York recently it was hailed as the "sleeper" of Christmas. The film is predicted to do at Christmas what

BELOW: The beautiful Sophie Ward, who has the role of Elizabeth, is flanked by Alan (left) and Nicholas.



ABOVE: Holmes (Nicholas Rowe) and Watson (Alan Cox) on the detective trail.

Spielberg's *Back To The Future* did in July and August — romp home at the box office.

Young Sherlock Holmes has everything — pacy story, villains, goodies, humor, witty dialogue, flying machines that actually fly, dastardly religious cults and underground temples and a tender love story. In addition to the brilliant script from Chris Columbus, who wrote Spielberg's *Gremlins* and *Goonies*, there are the expected

amazing special effects from George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic Company . . . and this time they are even more breathtaking.

There's the fantastic scene when Watson's beloved custard tarts and cream pies come to terrible life to haunt and torment him and there's a wonderful scene where a gothic stained-glass window steps down from the church wall and begins chasing a surprised, aged vicar. The transparent but three-dimensional stained glass crusading knight with a bloody sword is film genius and the first-up effect out of Lucas' newly created computer division.

Touted as "the adventure of a lifetime before their lifetime of adventure", this Sherlock Holmes film has Holmes and Watson as teenagers, before pomposity, arrogance and Holmes' emotionless reactions take precedence.

It gives audiences non-stop action from the opening scene.

The New York audience at one point was on its feet cheering the hero. After the credits roll, the dastardly villain, Rathe, signs his name in a hotel register. To say what he signs gives away the final trick of the film.

Director Barry Levinson, whose credits include *Diner* and last year's



RIGHT: Nicholas Rowe really looks the part for the title role in *Young Sherlock Holmes*.

The Natural, wanted *Young Sherlock Holmes* to appeal to audiences who were Holmes devotees as much as to people who had never heard of Sherlock Holmes or didn't really care.

"I wanted it to work as well if the hero was called Joe Holmes, not Sherlock Holmes," Levinson said.

Young Sherlock is partly filmed at England's famous public school Eton and it was a former Etonian, suggested by his old drama master, who ultimately was given the role. Nicholas Rowe, son of a British MP, was delighted and still cannot believe his luck... an amazing 10,000 young actors were considered!

Alan Cox, who plays Watson, was another marvellous find, according to Levinson. He is a superb Watson and very nearly steals the picture. He is the son of acclaimed British stage actor Brian Cox.

Another starring role in the film is that of Elizabeth, the niece of a retired schoolmaster, who lives at the school and befriends Holmes and Watson. She is played by Sophie Ward, the 19-year-old, luminously lovely daughter of Simon Ward.

The villain in *Young Sherlock* is played by Anthony Higgins and other roles throughout the film are played by some of the best character actors in Britain. They are a delight.

From Jenny Cullen in Los Angeles.



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